

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Sixth Form Studies and University Entrance Requirements

*Sixth Report of the
Secondary School Examinations Council*
1962



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This Sixth Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council records the Council's views on the place of examinations in the relationship between sixth form studies and university entrance requirements.

Part I contains the statement prepared for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and for myself, giving the Council's views on the proposals made in the recent Report of a sub-committee of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on University Entrance Requirements in England and Wales. This Report was published earlier this year in order to secure discussion of the suggestions made in it.

The Council's statement is based on the reports of two of the Council's Committees, which are published as Parts II and III of this Sixth Report.

Part II contains a close study, carried out by the Council's English Language Examining Committee, of the problems arising from the intention of some universities to include in their matriculation requirements a test in the use of English, to be taken towards the end of the sixth form course. The Council's English Language Examining Committee have not yet finished their work, and intend to prepare a fuller report covering other aspects of English examining.

Part III is the result of an enquiry undertaken by a sub-committee of the Council's G.C.E. Syllabus Committee. It reviews the development of General and General Studies examinations as part of the General Certificate of Education, and considers in some detail the extent to which general education in the sixth form should be subject to a compulsory examination for university entrance.

I consider this Report to be a valuable contribution to present discussions about the relationship between sixth form studies and university entrance requirements and, so far as Part I of the Report is concerned, I have expressed to the Vice-Chancellors' Committee the hope that they will be prepared, as the Report suggests, to join with the Council in further detailed study of the problems involved.

We have not yet discovered how best to give our sixth formers a thorough command of modern English, nor how best to test their powers of expression in the examination room. We must press on urgently with experiments in new methods both of teaching and of examining. But, until we are more sure of our ground, it may well be unwise to tie ourselves down to any single method of examining competence in the use of English, particularly where decisions as critical to a sixth former's future career as university entrance turn on the results of such tests.

I can also understand the Council's reluctance to see general education become a subject for compulsory examination and I accept their advice that if general education is to be compulsorily examined every care should be exercised to ensure that the methods of examination are made as various and flexible as possible. The facilities available to schools are so varied, and the techniques of examining general education as yet so uncertain, that it would be well to ensure that examinations do not restrict variety and development in the way in which sixth forms use their minority time.

I have noted the conclusion in paragraph 32 (b) of Part I, and I recognise that the present degree of competition for university entry bears closely on the issues discussed in this Report. The question of competition for university entry, in all its aspects, is within the purview of Lord Robbins' Committee on Higher Education. Meanwhile it is worth noting that the targets for university expansion already announced by the Government contemplate that from 1967 onwards a higher proportion of the relevant age group can hope to get to a university than is the case at present.

Finally, I should like to express my gratitude to Sir John Lockwood, and to his colleagues on the Council and their Committees, for all the work they have done to help us in our consideration of these problems.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EDWARD BOYLE

August, 1962.

14th August, 1962.

MY DEAR MINISTER,

I have pleasure in sending you the Sixth Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council, in which the Council express their views on certain aspects of the relationship between sixth form studies and university entrance requirements.

The Council decided at the end of 1960 that they should review the development of "general studies" and "general" papers within the G.C.E. examination, and of new methods of examining sixth form pupils in the use of the English language for purposes of university matriculation. They remitted these studies to two new committees, the English Language Examining Committee, and the General Studies Sub-Committee of the Council's G.C.E. Syllabus Committee.

The work of these two Committees was well advanced when, in April of this year, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals published their sub-committee's proposals on university entrance requirements in England and Wales, and invited the Council's views on them. You also asked me to send you the Council's comments on these proposals.

The Council, at their meeting on 10th July, 1962, were therefore able to consider their reply to these requests in the light of full reports from their two committees. They adopted the reports, together with a statement of their views on the proposals of the sub-committee of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and asked me to send them to you, and to invite you to publish them together as the Council's Sixth Report.

The Council hope that their findings and recommendations will make a useful contribution to the current discussions on the relationship between sixth form studies and university entrance requirements.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN LOCKWOOD.

The Right Hon. Sir Edward Boyle, Bt., M.P.,
Minister of Education.

PART I

Statement of the Secondary School Examinations Council on the Report of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on University Entrance Requirements

1. The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals have asked the Secondary School Examinations Council to comment by 30th June on the report of their sub-committee on university entrance requirements in England and Wales. A similar request has also been received from the Minister of Education.

2. We welcome the Committee's desire to clarify and codify admission requirements. We consider, however, that the detailed proposals made in the report require much fuller study than can be given within the time table suggested. The comments made in this paper are therefore confined to certain broad issues of principle which, in our view, require further clarification in discussion with the universities.

Competition for university entry

3. We consider that many of the problems examined in the report, and many of the difficulties which would be experienced by the schools if the sub-committee's proposals were to be accepted as they stand, stem directly from the present severe competition for university places. As a result, sixth form work in many schools has tended to become too much directed towards securing the best possible grades in a rather narrow range of subjects offered for the advanced level of the G.C.E. examination, and too little concerned with the development of young men and women ready and able to take full advantage of a university course. In our view, an increase in the number of university places is needed in order to relieve much of the anxiety felt in the schools about admissions. This would help all concerned to keep a sense of proportion about the volume of course work at the advanced level and so create opportunities for more work in the sixth form directed towards the development of truly educated university entrants. As it is, sixth form pupils put nearly all their efforts into securing the highest possible advanced level grades, and since the standards required by universities rise as the number of good candidates goes up, the pressure on schools to concentrate on course work increases correspondingly.

4. We therefore agree that the universities are right to feel concern about the standard of general education of many of those who satisfy the present requirements for admission and we acknowledge that the sub-committee's report makes a serious attempt to deal with the problem. But we are far from being satisfied that matters can be put right simply by increasing the extent to which sixth form work is geared to examination requirements.

5. If the objectives of the report can be met in any other way we would prefer that the schools should not be burdened with the task of preparing their sixth form pupils for additional papers to be taken as part of, or in association with, the advanced level of the G.C.E. In particular, we would

not welcome any measure which might inhibit the improvements in the sixth form curriculum which are now being made by many schools on an experimental basis; these are likely to gather momentum as the reduction in advanced level syllabuses gets under way.

6. We recognise, however, that competition for university entry is likely to remain severe for some time to come and we should therefore be happy to discuss with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals the contribution that the examination system might make to meeting the requirements of the universities, without damage to desirable long-term developments in the schools. It is in the context of this proposal that we offer the following comments on the detailed proposals made in the sub-committee's report.

The "General" requirement and its impact on the work of the schools

7. The proposal of the sub-committee's report is that "the General requirement, being the test of a candidate's general education, consists of required passes in certain . . . new papers to be introduced into the G.C.E. examination . . .".

8. We believe that we have shown, by our policy on existing and proposed G.C.E. examinations in general studies, that we recognise the importance of general education in sixth forms and the value, for schools that wish to make use of them, of these examinations. We are convinced, however, that the imposition of a course leading to a uniform examination, a pass in which was obligatory for university entrance, upon all sixth formers (for few schools would be able to organise alternative courses) would be premature under present conditions and would have harmful rather than beneficial effects upon general education. Our reasons follow.

9. We do not agree that general studies now occupy in sixth forms "a lowly and ineffective place". It is true that there are wide differences in this respect among schools and that the general situation is not entirely satisfactory. But it is for this reason that we regret the proposal to introduce a compulsory examination. Schools differ widely in their staffing resources, in their situation relative to centres of culture, and in their library and other facilities. Certainly, in some of them little progress has been made as yet in providing a broad general education for their sixth formers, and there are some in which what ought to be minority time is used for extra teaching of specialist subjects. But there are many where excellent and varied courses of general education are being developed, and an even greater number where experiments are being made, where the general courses are of very recent growth, where there is not as yet anything approaching certainty as to the best method of using minority time for general education and where, therefore, a compulsory examination would nip in the bud promising beginnings.

10. In the field of general studies it is especially important to give the schools a wide measure of freedom to develop the types of course best suited to their circumstances. Those teaching sixth forms have usually been appointed primarily to teach their special subjects, and for the purposes of general sixth form education each school must make use of the particular interests and abilities of its teachers. It is for the best that a

teacher in minority time should be dealing with topics in which he is especially interested ; but for this to be possible, the schools must be left to use their minority time in the way that makes the best use of their resources. A uniform compulsory general examination, once established, with its array of past question papers, would set severe limits to this freedom.

11. Furthermore, we do not agree that the mere imposition of new examinations of general education would, in itself, result in a reduction of the work demanded by the "Course" requirement. It is our view that, even when advanced level syllabuses have been reduced (and not all of them are capable of reduction), the amount of time, including teaching, private study and homework or preparation, given to a study of the reduced content should not necessarily be diminished: in those schools where a balance is already struck between specialist and general education the same amount of time should be spent on a study, in greater depth, of less material. But an amount of minority time which is at present satisfactory for courses of broad general education might well prove insufficient if preparation for an examination were also involved.

12. Examinations consume time in interruption of studies, in recapitulation (chiefly of factual content) and in the examination room itself. The total of this added burden would depend upon the kind of examination and the number of papers involved. Therefore we would urge that any test of general education which the universities might judge to be necessary for their purposes should be as brief and flexible as can be devised.

13. We recognise, however, the right of the universities to satisfy themselves that candidates for admission have made good use of their minority time for general education. We therefore ask, first, that there should be further study into means of doing this other than by compulsory examinations, and, second, if this fail, that the examination should be so devised as to impose the least possible limitation upon the freedom of the schools and the least possible total load of examinations upon sixth formers.

14. We should welcome the provision of a number of different methods of meeting the "General" requirement, provided that all were acceptable to all universities. We should like to investigate the possibility of schools submitting their own syllabuses, or setting their own internal examinations with external assessment. We understand that the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Board are considering a scheme of this sort. We consider this to be a particularly promising approach, and we should not like to exclude the possibility of other types of experiment.

The components of the "General" requirement

15. In making detailed proposals for a "General" requirement the report suggests that it should consist of required passes in certain of the following new papers:

- "A. A paper in the use of English, designed to encourage the serious study of the use of English in the sixth form, and demanding more than the kind of competence now required for passing the paper in English Language in the G.C.E. at Ordinary level. It should test free composition, comprehension, vocabulary, style and verbal ability, together with accuracy of presentation.

- B. A General paper. This paper should be set on the assumption that at an earlier stage candidates will have passed at Ordinary level in either Mathematics or a science subject and also in two or three of the usual arts subjects (though these will no longer be a formal entrance requirement), or that they will have studied these subjects to an equivalent standard.

There is need for discussion of the appropriate sub-division and choice of questions in this important paper. It might include questions on general topics for all candidates, together with questions on Literature, History, Art and the like appropriate to the needs of those offering science subjects at Advanced level, and, for those offering non-science subjects at Advanced level, questions calling for an elementary insight into Science and some understanding of simple mathematical processes, of logical problems, and of modes of quantitative reasoning.

- C. A paper in the use of foreign language, composed of questions requiring the translation and understanding of prose passages in languages other than English. It is for discussion whether, perhaps for candidates offering one language only, either translation from English into the foreign language or free composition in the language should be introduced."

16. We note that the papers are to be marked pass or fail but not otherwise graded, that passes in papers A and B are to constitute the "General" requirement but that paper C may be added if universities so choose. We also note that the papers will be taken not earlier than January in the candidate's second year in the sixth form.

17. On the assumption that the examination is to be a qualifying examination and not an aid to selection, we agree with the proposal to have "pass" and "fail" only in the requirement, though we consider that information about the performance of candidates who fail should be made available to schools; we should also wish to review this matter after two or three years' experience of the examination and of any other methods that may be worked out for satisfying the "General" requirement. We are less certain about the timing proposed for the tests since it is not clear from the sub-committee's report precisely what is intended; this is one of the matters we should like to discuss further with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

The Use of English paper (A)

18. Our English Language Examining Committee and General Studies Sub-Committee have considered whether it is desirable to test the use of English and, if it is, the best ways in which the tests might be set.

19. We note that there are differing opinions about these papers, among both our own members and others consulted. It is widely accepted however that many students lack the competence in written English that universities have a right to expect and that the ordinary level English examination usually taken at 16 does not and cannot ensure that university entrants have the competence required.

20. We have also considered with some care the views of those who believe that a separate examination in the use of English will be necessary because, they argue, if English is tested in a specialist subject, or in a General paper, the quality of the content may receive more attention from the examiner than the quality of the language employed. Moreover, they say that candidates for university entrance should not only be able to write competently on subjects of interest to them and to read with understanding over a wide range of subject matter. They should also possess, as part of their scholarly equipment, some ability to produce impersonal and objective English of the kind appropriate to the treatment of academic material.

21. Use of English papers are, however, still in an experimental stage. We believe that, in time, their usefulness and efficacy may become better established, and we hope that experiments will continue on an increasing scale. But at present neither their value nor their reliability has been established and in our view it is premature to make them a compulsory requirement for university entrance. Our views on the Use of English papers so far brought to our Committee's notice are as follows:—

- (a) although we agree that standards of expression ought to be improved, we doubt whether improvements will be secured by the kind of Use of English paper so far devised. We believe that a candidate's English ought to be tested through his writing of continuous prose on subjects within his experience. We do not, however, exclude the possibility of using a suitable test of comprehension which might include summary ;
- (b) there is a danger that Use of English papers would create an artificial division between form of expression and content. This is all the more possible if there are separate general papers which might be regarded as containing a "content" which the Use of English papers do not ;
- (c) because it is difficult to ensure consistent standards of marking a large number of essays, papers devoted solely to use of English have a tendency to contain the types of question which are more easily marked. The effect is that results tend to turn upon trivial and often disputed points of usage ;
- (d) if Use of English papers contain conventional questions on trivial grammatical points time will be devoted to preparation for them which may lead to narrow and stereotyped teaching taking the place of more valuable work in the sixth form ;
- (e) more effective study of modern English in the English Schools of universities is needed to secure better teaching of English usage. Teachers of English are trained in literature rather than language. Until this position is remedied, the introduction of Use of English papers may easily do more harm than good, both in their effect on sixth forms and by excluding suitable students from university.

A use of English test as part of the General paper

22. In paragraph 12 above we express concern that the "General" requirement would be an additional burden on the schools. We have therefore given some thought to the question whether the Use of English paper

(A) could be combined with the General Paper (B). Our views, which are based on close study by our General Studies Sub-Committee, are as follows:—

- (a) a General or General Studies examination would provide one form of test in competence in English free from many of the disadvantages of the Use of English paper described in paragraph 21 above;
- (b) a test of English and a test of general education could be combined through an examination which required continuous writing on a number of topics taken from different fields of study and which might also include a test of comprehension (which might include summary), and possibly, other types of test. These would, however, require further thought. Such an examination might provide one method of satisfying the universities on both subjects with the least possible burden on the schools and the least danger of unprofitable preparation.

The General paper (B)

23. As far as the content of the General paper is concerned we are not able to make detailed comment until the proposals contained in the report are more closely defined. We need only say that if time is to be allocated to these studies in the sixth form—and we doubt whether all candidates for admission will need to be tested in the way suggested—the subjects proposed to be included are not in themselves objectionable. We have already expressed our view that at the present time many schools would make a better use of minority time without the strait jacket of an external examination. And we also repeat our reservations about the effect that a compulsory requirement might have on the many experiments being undertaken in the schools.

24. On the details of the proposals, we would regret a division of the paper into questions aimed at arts students and others aimed at science students. While we agree that candidates should be expected to answer questions outside their own special fields, we consider that it would be an advantage if all candidates had to answer questions on both arts and science subjects, since in answering questions in a General paper even in his specialist subject the candidate has to approach it in a different way and present it in a form comprehensible to the non-expert.

25. We should also like to comment on the statement on page 16 of the report that "There is long experience of general papers in the college scholarship examinations of Oxford and Cambridge . . .". These papers, and the General papers set by some of the G.C.E. Examining Bodies for state scholarship purposes, are designed for selecting a minority of the ablest candidates and are not, in our opinion, suitable for testing the general education of the majority of sixth formers. There is in fact very little experience of methods of examining the general education of the average sixth former and further experiment is needed.

A paper in a foreign language (C)

26. According to the sub-committee's report, individual universities are to decide whether to make the requirement of a paper in the use of foreign language compulsory and our comments concern only those universities which

might decide to do so. We agree that it is right that university students should be able to read and comprehend at least one foreign language. But in many schools pupils will be discouraged by the existence of a compulsory test from beginning the study of a new language. The proposal to introduce such a test requires careful thought and we should hope that this might be one of the subjects which we could discuss further with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

27. The report assumes that before entering the sixth form pupils will have followed language courses of a broad scope. On this assumption we believe that a test of comprehension of the foreign language might well be sufficient. We are not anxious to perpetuate the use of passages for translation as the major method of testing comprehension and believe that questions requiring candidates to show that they have understood the meaning of passages of appropriate difficulty would provide an adequate means of testing that language study has been kept up in the sixth form.

Summary of views on the proposed "General" requirement

28. We therefore summarise our views on the proposal for a "General" requirement as follows:—

- (a) in the field of general studies there will always be a need for much flexibility and experiment. To make examinations in these subjects obligatory may therefore restrict their development;
- (b) we should therefore like to explore first with the universities the possibility of meeting the requirement without imposing new external examinations;
- (c) if, however, the use of minority time is to be tested by obligatory external examinations the burden of the examinations and preparation for them should be kept to a minimum having regard particularly to the difficulties of many schools of staffing sixth forms adequately;
- (d) the use of English requirement can be met by a paper which will also test candidates' general education;
- (e) on the assumptions stated, the foreign language requirement might be sufficiently met by a test in comprehension not involving passages for translation;
- (f) it follows from (c) and (d) above that the number of papers for the "General" requirement should be and can be reduced;
- (g) we should welcome the provision of a number of different methods of meeting the "General" requirement, provided that all were acceptable to all universities.

"Course" requirements

29. We consider that the sub-committee's proposals for the "Course" requirement need further study in relation to the probable requirements of certain faculties. Where the "Course" requirement of a faculty is more than the minimum of two advanced level passes, the total burden on sixth form time is correspondingly increased. Furthermore where a pupil is already offering at the advanced level of the G.C.E. examination a range of subjects which cover much of the ground proposed to be covered by the General papers there would appear to be no point in subjecting him to a double test.

30. In other words, even if it is agreed that a "General" requirement must be accepted in present circumstances, we consider that there may well be ways of meeting it, at any rate for some pupils, within the present structure of the G.C.E. examination. We would therefore like to join with the Committee in studying the connection between the "Course" requirement (or, more accurately, G.C.E. passes generally) and any "General" requirement that may be agreed.

31. We hope that the universities will make every effort to see that there is as little variation as possible in the "Course" requirements of different universities. We welcome the suggestion that, where possible, faculty requirements should be brought into line, and hope that everything possible will be done to eliminate unnecessary differences between the requirements of similar subjects in different universities. We do not consider, however, that the report lays sufficient emphasis on the necessity for this reform. At present an unnecessary additional burden is laid upon many sixth formers who have to ensure that they can satisfy the requirements of the faculty they wish to enter in any university in which they may be offered a place.

Conclusions

32. In summary, our views are as follows:—

- (a) we welcome the sub-committee's report, as directing attention to an urgent and important issue;
- (b) we consider, however, that a fully satisfactory relationship between sixth form studies and university entrance requirements is unlikely to be achieved while competition for university entry remains as severe as it is today;
- (c) we believe that the proposal to examine an additional area of sixth form work can, at best, provide only a palliative for the difficulties felt by the universities, and may in the process inhibit far more promising developments in the content of the sixth form curriculum;
- (d) we recognise, however, that competition for university entry is likely to remain severe for many years to come, and we should therefore be pleased to join with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in further detailed study of the contribution that examinations might make to meeting the requirements of the universities, with benefit to the work of both the schools and the universities;
- (e) our aim, in further joint study of the problem, would be to reduce the number of papers comprising the "General" requirement and to make available as many opportunities as possible for meeting it;
- (f) we hope that universities will make every effort to eliminate variations in the "Course" requirements of different universities.

PART II

Interim Report of the English Language Examining Committee: Use of English Papers

1. We were constituted a Committee by a decision of the Council on 7th December, 1960, with the following terms of reference:—

“To consider any proposals that may be made for examining sixth form pupils in the use of the English language for purposes of university matriculation; and in this context to consider whether, and if so, what, changes are desirable in the examination of English at ordinary level; and to report their conclusions to the Council.”

2. We first met on 9th May, 1961, and we have since held nine further meetings, two of them jointly with the General Studies Sub-Committee of the Syllabus Committee.

3. In view of the urgency with which proposals for testing the competence in English of sixth form university candidates are to be put into effect, we have thought it right to direct our attention initially to the first part of our terms of reference, and to submit this interim report on Use of English papers as early as possible.

4. Towards the end of 1960, there appeared the reports of the Committees on Entrance Requirements of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, both of which included a proposal, since adopted, that a pass in a test of competence in English language, to be taken towards the end of the sixth form course, should be a matriculation requirement of the universities. The effective dates, announced later, were 1964 for Oxford and 1965 for Cambridge. At about the same time, it became known that the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board were proposing to introduce in 1964 new matriculation requirements which had been under consideration for some years and which included, as part of one method of meeting the requirements, a Test in English. In May, 1962, we received the report of a sub-committee on University Entrance Requirements of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, which proposed, as part of a “General” requirement for university entrance, to be taken not earlier than January in the candidate's second year in the sixth form, “A paper in the use of English, designed to encourage the serious study of the use of English in the sixth form, and demanding more than the kind of competence now required for passing the paper in English Language in the G.C.E. at ordinary level. It should test free composition, comprehension, vocabulary, style and verbal ability together with accuracy of presentation.”

5. We have considered these proposals, together with the existing Use of English paper set for scholarship candidates by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, and such experimental and specimen examination papers in the use of English as we have been able to obtain. We have sought the opinions of the approved examining bodies for the G.C.E. and of a representative sample of selective and comprehensive secondary schools in England and Wales. A description of this sample and a summary of the replies to our enquiry are given in Appendix A. We have in addition made a similar enquiry of a number of schools known by our members to be especially interested in this problem; and we have received certain written evidence that has been submitted to us by individuals which is listed in Appendix B.

6. These enquiries and discussions have revealed that there are wide differences of opinion both among our own members and among those we have consulted about the examining of competence in the use of English in the sixth form.

The case for the introduction of Use of English papers

7. The decision of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge to introduce a sixth form test in English language into their entrance requirements was based on the conclusion of their Committees that "far too high a proportion of undergraduates at the time of their matriculation find undue difficulty in expressing themselves clearly and accurately in their own language. The standard of English appears to us to be in general regrettably low . . . in the country as a whole". (Oxford); "a pass at Ordinary level in English Language . . . is insufficient to ensure that a candidate for admission to the University has sufficient facility in the use of English to enable him to undertake a course of reading in the University." (Cambridge); and it appears that in some schools no serious attention is paid to English as such, once the hurdle of ordinary level has been passed. (Both universities).

8. These complaints are not unfamiliar and there is much to substantiate them. We therefore welcome the attention which has been drawn to the problem and we recognise the need for action. We believe, however, that the causes of the problem, and the consequences of any action taken, may go deeper than is often realised and need to be carefully examined before we can predict that any particular remedy is likely to prove efficacious.

The present situation in the schools

9. Among the schools we consulted we found almost unanimous agreement that the standard of competence in English among sixth formers had declined in recent years. Our enquiries have led us to believe that there are four main reasons for this.

10. First, reading and writing now occupy a less important position among means of communication than they once did. Boys and girls (as well as adults) seek relaxation in the cinema and television rather than in reading, use the telephone rather than write a letter, and generally prefer oral and pictorial means of communication to the written word.

11. Second, traditional methods of studying the English language in secondary schools have not been wholly effective. The treatment of the structure of the language has often been based upon grammatical rules derived from classical Latin, or from abstract theories based upon insufficient knowledge of language development, which are inappropriate to modern English. Examinations at ordinary level have naturally followed the same pattern and so have tended to prolong a misdirected method of teaching which assumes that a living language is subject to a single set of rules of correctness and incorrectness, regardless of style or occasion.

12. Third, there have been substantial increases in the number of pupils staying on in the sixth form. The change in the sixth form from a small to a large group has meant that a severe strain has been put on the facilities available, such as teaching accommodation and library provision, and that each pupil receives less individual attention.

13. Finally, the keen competition for university places has led many sixth formers to abandon the study and practice of English as such after they have passed the G.C.E. examination at ordinary level, in order to concentrate their time and energy on the study of their specialist subjects. Moreover, hard pressed teachers of English in the sixth form, fully occupied in preparing their specialist pupils for the advanced level examination in literature, have had little time left over for the non-specialists, so that non-specialist study of English is often withdrawn just when it is most needed. The need is greater for some sixth formers than for others, since in the gaining of a command of a received form of English acceptable for academic needs some have had less help than others from their home background and their traditional modes of speech. Our enquiry made it clear, however, that the problem was not confined solely to these—it concerned a high proportion of all university entrants.

14. Whatever we may think of these trends it seems clear that they arise in part from modification in habits of the civilised world which cannot be reversed. In considering representations about a decline in standards we should be careful to distinguish between real and serious impairment and what in a changing world may be no more than the natural adaptation of a living tongue, or the honest recognition of usages long current but not always acknowledged by traditional grammarians. The study of language should take account of current as well as past development. It would be wrong, therefore, to teach and to set examinations in a living language as though it were a dead one.

15. Certainly, many aspects of English teaching could be improved, and they must be improved if present deficiencies are to be remedied. We have already said that there are not enough highly qualified teachers of English to meet the needs of all sixth formers. The best informed and most imaginative teaching of language is demanded in the sixth form; it is there that boys and girls are beginning to find the need for more subtle and more precise use of language to express profounder and more complex ideas. At that stage it should be clear to them all that different modes of English are required to meet differing linguistic situations, and that for academic and certain other purposes they need a clear, logical and impersonal style of expression very different from that of familiar speech and writing. Their teachers should have an understanding of the actual structure of modern English and be aware of the fact that language changes and of the processes of change; only so can they guide their pupils towards maturity in linguistic skill without sacrificing freshness and fluency of personal expression. What is said here of the need for highly qualified teachers may be applied with equal force to the need for highly qualified examiners.

16. The problem is not merely one of shortage of teachers. In very few British universities does the course leading to a degree in English include a searching study of modern English; in few of them does the study of language do as much justice to the language of today as to the language of Chaucer and Shakespeare. Teachers with graduate qualifications in English are ordinarily specialists in English literature rather than in the modern language. They are naturally enthusiasts for their own speciality and some may pursue the literary aspects of language to the exclusion of

that of communication. There are, it is true, teachers who on their own initiative have kept themselves informed of modern developments in language study, and their influence is of the greatest value. But they are few, and the universities are at present hardly adding to them. There are three chief ways in which the universities can influence the schools: in the provision of well-qualified examiners, in the education of potential teachers and in the imposition of new examinations. On the whole we think it likely that their influence could be more beneficial and effective through the second than through the third.

17. It is often said, and the point has been frequently put in our own discussions, that if pupils have been taught English well throughout their school life they will be able to take a sixth form test in English in their stride. This is no doubt true. But we cannot assume that most pupils have been taught equally well throughout their school life, particularly since there is not at present a sufficiency of adequately trained specialist teachers of English. For this reason alone merely to introduce another examination at sixth form level, while it may sometimes help, is unlikely by itself to produce a radical improvement.

Use of English papers

18. We have said that both we ourselves and those we have consulted are divided in opinion concerning Use of English papers. We now attempt to summarise the arguments for and against them.

Arguments of those in favour of Use of English papers

19. Those who favour the introduction of Use of English papers argue that the English language examination at ordinary level does not guarantee a sufficiently high standard of English for university entrance; an examination usually taken at 16 does not ensure that training in English is continued in the sixth form.

20. They put forward a second reason for the necessity of a separate examination in English in the sixth form. If English is tested by means of a candidate's writing in his specialist subject, the quality of the "content" will always receive more attention from the examiner, normally a specialist, than the quality of the language employed. But university students are not specialists all the time and a test in English through the means of a General paper runs into the same difficulties of distinguishing between the worth of what the candidate has to say and his ability to communicate it.

21. Some further argue that the introduction of a matriculation requirement in English, to be prepared for in the sixth form, will shift some of the competition for university places away from the specialist subjects, and lead to an increased emphasis on English studies. Some also favour the introduction of grades of pass so that a good performance would bring the candidate credit and be of benefit to him in the competition for university places.

Arguments of those opposed to the introduction of Use of English papers

22. Those who are opposed to Use of English papers say that these papers will require candidates to offer written work when they have nothing of substance to communicate. The subjects to be treated will be outside the pupils' main interests and will be regarded as separate from them. At

best the pupils may merely learn a technique of writing for these papers which will have small effect on their writing in other subjects.

23. Some see an even greater danger than this. It is argued that experience of the examination at ordinary level has shown that, because of the difficulty of ensuring consistent standards of marking a large number of essays, there is a tendency for essays to be marked within a narrow band, so that in practice examination results are unduly influenced by the marks awarded for other questions, which are more easily marked, even though these may be concerned with trivial and disputed points of usage. If the result of the examination depends upon answers to questions such as these teaching time will be devoted to preparation for them. This could lead to a narrow kind of teaching, which might take the place of more valuable work in the sixth form.

24. Those who oppose Use of English papers wish to ensure that English should receive more attention in the sixth form, but they claim that the introduction of a new sixth form examination can only do harm to the promising experimental work to be found in the schools. Moreover, they fear that in many schools where the one or two periods available for non-specialist English are used mainly for the reading and discussion of good writing there is a danger that this time will, if the new examination is introduced, be used in specific preparation for it and the broader and more liberal studies will be sacrificed.

25. It is further argued that the Use of English papers themselves are still at an experimental stage. Their reliability has not been established. It is, therefore, premature to make these papers a compulsory matriculation requirement, and to do so could well have the effect of excluding suitable students from the university.

Opinion of the Committee

26. For the reasons given in paragraphs 9 to 17 above, we are agreed that the introduction of Use of English papers cannot provide a complete solution to the problem. We are, however, aware that the decisions to introduce these papers have already been taken at several universities. New examinations are already in being and are likely to remain for several years. The problem which immediately faces the Secondary School Examinations Council is whether these examinations should be brought into the General Certificate of Education examination. This would seem to depend upon whether or not a reasonable compromise can be found whereby the requirements of the universities can be brought into harmony with the work of the schools.

27. We are agreed that a candidate's English ought to be tested through his writing of continuous prose, on subjects within his experience. Most of us would add a suitable test of comprehension which might include summary. About other types of question opinion is divided but we agree that no question should be set only because it is easy to mark. We also agree on the necessity for variety and experiment in the exact form of the paper.

28. We have considered the argument that in specialist subjects the "content" receives more attention than the expression; but this is as it should

be. We should hope that any assessment of English would begin by taking into account efficiency of communication and appropriateness of language, and this can be done only in a definite and substantial context. We should hope that the aims and methods of any such test would be positive in the sense just defined rather than negative, that is to say a mechanical deduction of marks for such things as defective grammar and spelling. To penalise bad spelling too harshly can discourage the use of the wide vocabulary which is essential to the development of good usage.

29. It is, in any case, with candidates' expression in their subjects of study that the universities are particularly concerned, and an examination entirely divorced from these subjects is not likely to bring about the improvement they desire. These considerations have led some of those opposed to Use of English examinations to argue that candidates' English should be assessed on their advanced level papers. This is an attractive proposal; it would make training in expression part of every subject and test the candidate's use of English where he uses English most. It would, however, involve formidable practical difficulties. In some subjects which do not involve continuous writing an additional paper would be necessary, and a double system of marking would complicate the already difficult business of dealing with a large and growing number of papers in a reasonable time. The difficulty of ensuring comparability of standards among different subjects might be insuperable. We consider, however, that further study might be devoted to the possibilities of schemes which would take into account candidates' performances on their advanced level papers. Improvements in the English used in the examination room have been known after the publication of warnings that candidates would be penalised, and in extreme cases failed, for slovenly presentation. We feel that developments of this kind are to be welcomed.

30. Another possibility might be to combine a test of English with a test of general education. We have discussed this with the Council's sub-committee set up to consider examinations in general education and our two Committees agreed that the two tests could be combined.

31. The two Committees agreed that an examination which tested English in association with general education would be free from many of the objections which have been raised to Use of English papers and that such a paper could provide an adequate test of English. In the present General papers the candidate is required to write on several topics, to marshal his facts and to present them clearly and in language appropriate to each subject. This we regard as an essential part of the testing of English. We should, of course, be concerned that in any combined test some regard should be paid to the pattern of the whole examination to ensure that the Use of English element received proper emphasis.

32. There is reason to believe that the universities regard a test of comprehension as an essential part of any test in the Use of English and that they would not accept for matriculation purposes any paper which did not contain such a test. We are prepared to support the inclusion of a test of comprehension (which might include summary), on the understanding that the type of test would be subject to frequent variation, and that passages set for comprehension would be of interest and significance, and, usually, examples of

the good use of English—in short, they would normally be passages of some quality.

33. To sum up, therefore, we find that the interests of the schools and of the universities have much in common. These interests might in present circumstances best be served by an examination which would test candidates' English at the same time as their general education and include a test of comprehension as well as continuous writing.

34. An example of an examination which fulfils these conditions is the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board's General Studies examination at advanced level. We understand that the universities of Oxford and Cambridge have already decided to accept a pass in this examination in place of a pass in a Use of English paper. We regard this as hopeful of the kind of compromise that we have in mind and we would welcome the introduction of other types of paper, not necessarily of the same pattern, if they fulfilled the conditions we have set out above, and provided that all were accepted by all universities. Whatever papers are introduced, it is important that they should be scrutinised with reference not only to university needs but also to their effect upon the schools.

35. We consider that it would be unreasonable to place on the schools the entire blame for the shortcomings of undergraduates in English expression. It is not to be expected that university students will ever enter upon their courses with a skill in the writing of English which needs no further pains or practice. Since their studies involve words they may well need help in doing justice to the expression of their work as it develops. We believe that the universities will increasingly find it desirable to pay more attention than they have usually paid in the past to the skill in expression of their undergraduates in all faculties.

36. Finally, we have to consider an immediate problem: whether Use of English papers of the type now being set for university matriculation purposes should be recognised at any level in the General Certificate of Education examination. Many of us have misgivings about these papers both because of the effect they may have upon English teaching and because their reliability as assessments of writing ability has not yet been established. We believe therefore that we should not be justified in recommending their recognition at present.

Conclusions

37. (a) Many of the present difficulties in English expression reflect wider changes which are taking place, or which having taken place have only recently been recognised, in the language.

(b) They will not be remedied until sufficient teachers are available fully equipped to help pupils to develop their powers of expression in modern English. We consider that the universities could do much to influence the work of the schools through the inclusion of the study of modern English in degree courses.

(c) In the meantime, any examination papers that inhibit experiment in sixth form English teaching are likely to be harmful.

- (d) If a new test is to be introduced, a candidate's English should be tested on continuous writing on a subject of concern to him.
- (e) We are, however, prepared to recommend that such a test should be combined with a test of comprehension, which might include summary, subject to certain conditions which we have set out above.
- (f) We believe that a test of English and a test of general education can be combined, and we believe that other types of paper should be considered as tests of English.
- (g) We do not recommend that Use of English papers in their present form should be recognised as subjects in the G.C.E. examination.

28.

Appendix A

Analysis of replies from a representative sample of schools

1. We decided at an early stage to consult the schools about the examination of English. Accordingly we drew up a five per cent random sample of selective and comprehensive schools so as to reflect, as far as possible, the number of boys', girls' and mixed, small, average and large schools in the country and the number in each geographical area. An analysis of the sample is given in Table I.

2. We sent a questionnaire, which covered several aspects of English examining, to these 141 schools, of which 135 replied.*

Introductory

3. An introductory section asked for factual and statistical information. From this various tables were drawn up. Those which are relevant to the present enquiry are reproduced on pages 23-28. An analysis of the schools which replied by type and sex is given in Table II.

Table III shows how many of these schools took the examination of each G.C.E. examining body. Table IV shows the number of English periods given in the sixth form to English, other arts and science specialists. Tables IV (A), (B) and (C) give this information for boys', girls' and mixed schools separately.

Use of English

4. One section of the questionnaire dealt with examinations in the Use of English. The questions in this section and a summary of the replies are given below:—

Question 1. "How much justification do you think there is for the complaints made by many, in universities and elsewhere, about the inadequate command of English shown by older students and others who have passed at least the examination in English language at ordinary level?"

95 schools indicated that there was some justification for the complaints, 18 indicated that there was little and 6 indicated that there was none.

Question 2. "Do you think that a candidate's use of English can be adequately assessed by marking for this purpose,

(a) his work in a General or General Studies paper?"

71 schools answered "Yes"; 41 "No".

(b) "his work in existing advanced level papers?"

52 schools answered "Yes"; 59 "No".

Question 3. "In what ways do you think that a Use of English paper might improve matters?"

55 schools suggested ways in which Use of English papers might improve matters, 28 also suggested possible improvements, but added doubts or reservations, and 33 indicated that they did not think Use of English papers would improve matters, or that they would do positive harm.

* Some schools which replied did not answer all questions.

The proportion of schools holding these views was very similar among the boys', girls' and mixed schools and among the grammar schools, technical schools and independent schools.

Most of the schools which thought Use of English papers might improve matters suggested that they could do so by concentrating more attention on English and by giving it higher prestige. 10 schools said that more time would have to be allocated to it. 15 schools mentioned that more attention to English would be particularly valuable to science students. Some answers presupposed a certain type of paper; one said the examination could help by stimulating reading, another "by removing the false notion that the study of language is an end in itself."

Most schools which mentioned the type of English they wished to see taught in the sixth form specified relatively advanced studies, such as the development of logical argument. Only a minority wanted more attention paid to basic technicalities.

The doubts expressed were largely that the examination would not be helpful if it were on the same lines as the ordinary level English language examination and that it could not be undertaken without a reduction of advanced level syllabuses in other subjects.

Question 4. "If a Use of English paper is introduced would it in your view be desirable in this paper to test a candidate's capacity to write continuous prose?"

122 schools answered "Yes", no school answered "No".

Question 5. (i) "Should the paper be confined to the writing of continuous prose?"

15 schools answered "Yes"; 101 "No".

(ii) "If not should there also be compulsory or optional questions testing (a) comprehension of English prose?"

102 schools said "compulsory", 11 "optional", 3 "No".

(b) "knowledge of formal grammar?"

12 schools said "compulsory", 42 "optional", 60 "No".

(c) "knowledge of the structure and usage of present day English (e.g. discussion of standard English, the coining and adoption of new words, characteristics of different styles in spoken and written English etc.)?"

25 schools said "compulsory", 62 "optional", 27 "No".

(d) "a capacity for logical thinking?"

89 schools said "compulsory", 21 "optional", 6 "No".

(e) "the ability to vary expression to suit subject and occasion, and awareness of the role of such variations in human communication?"

48 schools said "compulsory", 50 "optional", 18 "No".

Question 6. "What other types of question would you or your colleagues like to see?"

There was no overwhelming demand for any particular type of question. The largest group (10 schools) wanted precis. Other types of question mentioned were, practice in scientific writing and the interpretation of

statistics, figures and graphs; exercises on the emotive use of language; literary appreciation and criticism and questions on poetry and verse; summary and note-taking; exercises on the correction of errors, synthesis and expansion, vocabulary, figures of speech, and spelling; and an oral test.

Question 7. "Do you consider that the examination should be based upon

(a) a body of knowledge to be prescribed in a syllabus?"

40 schools answered "Yes"; 69 "No".

(b) "a prescribed reading list?"

49 schools answered "Yes"; 62 "No".

Question 8. (i) "What form does English teaching take in the sixth form for (a) arts specialists (other than those taking advanced level English)?"

20 schools gave no teaching in English to these pupils.

The types of English teaching mentioned by other schools were mainly general courses in language and literature, especially modern literature; general studies; appreciation and comprehension; discussion, reading and writing.

(b) "science and mathematics specialists?"

12 schools gave no teaching in English to these pupils.

43 said that the same teaching was given to those in (a) and (b). On the whole the type of teaching given was similar to that for arts specialists, except that essay-writing was specified more often, presumably because science students had less practice in this in their main subjects.

(ii) "To what extent does it require any writing of continuous prose?"

There were various types of answer to this question. 10 schools said that continuous prose of some kind was written weekly, 9 said fortnightly, 7 said two to four times a term and 2 said once a term. Others merely said "regularly", "frequently", "little" or "some". 2 said "none".

Question 9. (i) "Would the introduction of a Use of English paper be likely in your school to affect

(a) the number of periods assigned to English studies?"

45 schools answered "Yes"; 64 "No".

(b) "the nature of the teaching during these periods?"

55 schools answered "Yes"; 49 "No".

(c) "the number of periods devoted to general studies?"

41 schools answered "Yes"; 61 "No".

(ii) "If it is found necessary to teach for a Use of English paper what relation, if any, do you think such teaching might have with any periods of general studies in the sixth form?"

63 schools indicated that they thought that tuition for a Use of English paper could be related in some way to general studies, such as by setting essays on subjects of general interest. 21 schools indicated that they thought the two would have to be taught separately.

Question 10. "If Use of English papers become a general demand for university entrance, how would this be likely to affect the number of candidates in your school taking ordinary level English language examinations in the next few years?"

94 schools said that it was likely to have no effect, 8 said it would have little effect and 6 said it would have some considerable effect.

General

5. A general section invited other comments and views. The replies which had a bearing on Use of English examinations are summarised in paragraphs 6-13 below:—

Causes of the decline in standards of English

6. In their general remarks several schools blamed the decline in the importance of the written word for lowered standards of English. The English used in advertising and by the Press and the prevalence of slang and Americanisms were cited as examples of the bad influences to which children were exposed.

7. A few schools blamed shortage of staff and overcrowding in schools. One thought bad English was the result of too much emphasis on science. Another said that insufficient formal grammar was taught in primary schools and suggested that "11+" examinations should concentrate on English instead of intelligence tests.

8. Three schools said the universities were partly to blame for declining English standards because they demanded so much factual knowledge. 3 other schools suggested that a reduction in advanced level syllabuses would in itself improve the situation by allowing more time to be devoted to English.

Use of English papers

9. More of the schools which were opposed to Use of English papers or had doubts or reservations about them enlarged upon their reasons in the general section than did those in favour.

10. The comments of the schools in favour of Use of English papers were that people who could not express themselves in good English should be debarred from the university, that the examination would be a more reliable test than the ordinary level examination and that it would provide a bridge between the "two cultures" of arts and science. 2 schools in favour of the examination thought it should consist only of an essay and precis.

11. Schools opposed to the examination argued that the ordinary level examination was unreliable, that there was no reason why a Use of English examination should be more reliable and that it was likely to destroy existing links between the "two cultures" by driving out more valuable work in English and general studies. Others feared that it would lead to "a barren teaching technique designed to answer typical 'English language' questions rather than to the development of a good English style" and that it would increase the pressure on already overworked sixth formers and English teachers.

12. There was a widespread (27 schools) suspicion that the skills acquired for a Use of English paper would not be applied to other subjects. There was substantial support for taking into account the quality of a candidate's written work in subjects other than English, in his advanced level papers or perhaps by means of a separate essay paper in each subject. About a third of the schools which made any comment on Use of English papers in the general section reached this conclusion. Two schools remarked that there was disagreement among their own staff upon it; some of them felt that it would be impossible to fail pupils in advanced level papers if their facts were right. One school suggested as a solution that the highest grades should be awarded only to those candidates who had shown a good command of English, and the other suggested that there should be a separate assessment of English by a different examiner.

13. A comprehensive school expressed concern that schools' use of minority time might come under the control of the universities and a technical school thought that an advanced level Use of English Paper would be unfair to science and mathematics specialists.

Welsh Schools

14. The sample included 10 Welsh schools, all of which replied. On the whole opinion among them was similar to that of English schools. Where there were differences they are mentioned below, but differences might be magnified because of the small number involved.

Use of English

15. In the replies to Question 1, of the 6 schools in the whole sample which thought there was no justification for the complaints made, 3 were Welsh. 2 thought there was little justification, 4 some.

16. The replies to Question 3 showed that Welsh schools were more opposed to Use of English papers than the whole sample. 4 schools suggested ways in which these papers might improve matters, 2 had doubts and reservations and 4 were against them.

17. In reply to Question 4, 2 schools thought the paper should be confined to the writing of continuous prose. 7 said "No".

18. In reply to Question 7, 5 schools wanted a prescribed reading list. 1 said "No."

19. In reply to Question 9, relatively more schools thought they would be affected by the introduction of Use of English papers than in the whole sample.

20. In reply to Question 10, all schools said the numbers taking ordinary level English language would not be affected.

Selected schools

21. The questionnaire was also sent to 41 schools selected because their views were likely to be of special interest. 39 of these replied.

22. The replies from the selected schools were kept separate from the sample. On the whole there were not wide differences of opinion between the two groups, but the selected schools tended to be more doubtful about the effect of Use of English papers.

Use of English

23. In the replies to Question 1, relatively fewer schools thought there was justification for the complaints made ; 18 thought there was some justification, 11 thought there was little and 5 thought there was none.

24. The replies to Question 2 showed the selected schools were more emphatically in favour of the assessment of English on a General or General Studies paper than the sample. 27 answered "Yes" and 4 "No."

25. In the replies to Question 3, there was a higher proportion of schools with doubts or reservations about Use of English papers among the selected schools than in the representative sample. Among the selected schools, 11 suggested ways in which Use of English papers might improve matters, 18 expressed doubts and reservations and 8 thought they would not improve matters, or that they would do harm.

General

26. The largest group among the selected schools which made comments in the general section consisted of 5 schools which enlarged upon their opinion that English should be tested in a General or General Studies examination. 3 thought it should be tested on specialist papers. 3 schools said that the universities should themselves do more to promote good standards of English among their undergraduates.

27. Other new points were that Use of English papers might prevent able scientists and mathematicians from entering a university and a plea that any new papers should stimulate creative writing and test appreciation, not comprehension.

TABLES

TABLE I

5 per cent. Random Sample of Selective Secondary Schools

Type	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Total
Grammar	21	21	19	61
Direct Grant	5	5	—	10
Technical	6	2	5	13
Comprehensive and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...	2	2	6	10
" Other " Secondary	3	3	7	13
Independent (Recognised as Efficient) ...	10	22	2	34
Total	47	55	39	141

TABLE II

Schools which replied to the questionnaire

Type	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Total
Grammar	21	21	18	60
Direct Grant	5	5	—	10
Technical	7	2	4	13
Comprehensive and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...	2	—	6	8
" Other " Secondary	3	3	7	13
Independent (Recognised as Efficient) ...	9	22	—	31
Total	47	53	35	135

2 independent schools shown in the Ministry's records as "mixed" had become girls' schools and a technical school, also shown as "mixed," had become a boys' school by the time the questionnaire was returned.

TABLE III

Examination taken by Schools in the Sample

<i>Examining Body</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>
Associated Examining Board	8
Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate	23
Durham Matriculation and School Examination Board	5
London University Entrance and School Examinations Council ...	22
Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board	33
Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board	8
Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations	28
Southern Universities' Joint Board	3
Welsh Joint Education Committee	8

NOTE: Some schools took the examination of more than one examining body. The proportion of schools taking the examination of each examining body could not be pre-determined because no such record exists.

TABLE IV
English Periods in Sixth Forms

Type of School	English Students												Other Arts												Science					
	Number of Periods												Number of Periods												Number of Periods					
	15	13	12	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Nil	5	4	3	2	1	Nil		
1st Year																														
Grammar ...				3	2	16	15	21	4	2																				
Direct Grant ...				1	2	1	5	1																						
Technical ...			1		2	1	1			2																				
Comp. and Bi and Multi-Lateral ...						2	1						1																	
Other Sec. ...						3	2	14	4																					
Independent ...						2	3																							
Total 1st Year ...			1	3	5	28	19	43	8	5			1	1	7	3	8	3	8	9	23	5	37	2	9	11	37	16	33	
2nd Year																														
Grammar ...				2	3	13	18	16	4	2																				
Direct Grant ...				2	1	3	3																							
Technical ...			1		1					2																				
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...					2	1	1						1																	
Other Sec. ...					2	1	1						1																	
Independent ...				1	1	4	7	10																						
Total 2nd Year ...			1	3	6	23	30	30	4	5			2		3	2	1	1	10	4	23	8	45		7	6	38	19	32	
3rd Year																														
Grammar ...																														
Direct Grant ...				2	2	6	12	2	5	2	3	3																		
Technical ...				1	1	1	2		2	1																				
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...						1	1																							
Other Sec. ...						1	1																							
Independent ...			1			2	2	1	3				1	1																
Total 3rd Year ...			1	1	3	11	16	6	8	4	5	4		4	1	1	1	1	3	2	11	4	36		3	2	18	9	32	

* Some schools which showed no English periods for these groups listed such activities as play-reading in answer to Question 8 (i) in the "Use of English" Section.

TABLE IV (a) (BOYS)
English Periods in Sixth Forms

Type of School	English Students												Other Arts					Science				
	Number of Periods												Number of Periods					Number of Periods				
	15	13	12	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Nil
<i>1st Year</i>																						
Grammar
Direct Grant
Technical
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral
Other Sec.
Independent
Total 1st Year
<i>2nd Year</i>																						
Grammar
Direct Grant
Technical
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral
Other Sec.
Independent
Total 2nd Year
<i>3rd Year</i>																						
Grammar
Direct Grant
Technical
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral
Other Sec.
Independent
Total 3rd Year

TABLE IV (b) (GIRLS)
English Periods in Sixth Forms

Type of School	English Students												Other Arts						Science									
	Number of Periods												Number of Periods						Number of Periods									
	15	13	12	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Nil	5	4	3	2	1	Nil
1st Year																												
Grammar ...																												
Direct Grant ...																												
Technical ...																												
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral																												
Other Sec. ...																												
Independent ...																												
Total 1st Year ...																												
2nd Year																												
Grammar ...																												
Direct Grant ...																												
Technical ...																												
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral																												
Other Sec. ...																												
Independent ...																												
Total 2nd Year ...																												
3rd Year																												
Grammar ...																												
Direct Grant ...																												
Technical ...																												
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral																												
Other Sec. ...																												
Independent ...																												
Total 3rd Year ...																												

TABLE IV (c) (MIXED)
English Periods in Sixth Forms

Type of School	English Students												Other Arts												Science											
	Number of Periods												Number of Periods												Number of Periods											
	15	13	12	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	NIL	5	4	3	2	1	NIL								
<i>1st Year</i>																																				
Grammar ...							7	7	5	1					2	1	1	1	4	2	2	1	9													
Direct Grant ...																																				
Technical ...			1				1								1																					
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...							2	1					1																							
Other Sec. ...							3																													
Independent ...																																				
Total 1st Year ...			1				13	8	7	1			1		3	1	1	2	4	2	4	1	15													
<i>2nd Year</i>																																				
Grammar ...																																				
Direct Grant ...							1	1	5						2																					
Technical ...			1																																	
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...							2	1					1		1																					
Other Sec. ...							2																													
Independent ...							1																													
Total 2nd Year ...			1	1	1	10	8	4	1			1		3																						
<i>3rd Year</i>																																				
Grammar ...																																				
Direct Grant ...							2	6	1				1		1																					
Technical ...																																				
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral ...							1	1																												
Other Sec. ...							1																													
Independent ...																																				
Total 3rd Year ...							4	8	2			1		2																						

TABLE IV (W)
WALES

Type of School	English Students										Other Arts										Science		
	Number of Periods										Number of Periods										Number of Periods		
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Nil	3	2	1	Nil
<i>1st Year</i>																							
Grammar ...	1	—	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	1	—	4
Direct Grant ...	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—
Technical ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	1
Independent ...	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Total 1st Year ...	1	—	4	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	5	—	2	1	5
<i>2nd Year</i>																							
Grammar ...	2	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	1	—	4
Direct Grant ...	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Technical ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—
Independent ...	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Total 2nd Year ...	2	—	4	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6	—	1	3	4
<i>3rd Year</i>																							
Grammar ...	1	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	1	—	3
Direct Grant ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Technical ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Comp. and Bi- and Multi-Lateral	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Independent ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total 3rd Year ...	1	—	2	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	1	1	—	3

Appendix B

Evidence considered by the English Language Examining Committee

The following individuals have submitted written evidence to the Committee :—

- Miss M. M. Black, Head Mistress, The Girls' Grammar School, Bradford, 9.
 Dr. J. P. Brockbank, Senior Lecturer in English, Reading University and
 Professor-designate, York University.
 E. A. Hewitt, Lecturer, Department of Education, Durham University.
 Professor A. McIntosh, Department of English Language and General
 Linguistics, Edinburgh University.
 G. M. Thornton, Senior English Master, Lower School of John Lyon, Harrow.
 Professor W. Empsom, Professor of English, Sheffield Univer-
 sity.
 Professor Boris Ford, Director, Sheffield University Institute
 of Education.
 Professor D. W. Harding, Professor of Psychology, Bedford
 College, London University.
 R. Hoggart, Lecturer in English, Leicester University.
 Professor A. R. Humphreys, Professor of English, Leicester
 University.
 Lord James of Rusholme, Vice-Chancellor, York University.
 F. R. Leavis, Reader in English, Cambridge University.
 Professor C. Madge, Professor of Sociology, Birmingham
 University.
 Professor Ben Morris, Director, Bristol University Institute of
 Education.
 Professor K. Muir, Professor of English, Liverpool University.
 W. W. Robson, Lecturer in English, Lincoln College, Oxford.
 Professor P. Ure, Professor of English, Durham University.

Joint
Memorandum

The G.C.E. Examining Bodies were consulted and sent the Committee the following documents:—

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cambridge | ... | ... | Summer 1960 Use of English paper for State
Scholarship candidates. |
| | | | Summer 1961 Use of English paper for State
Scholarship candidates. |
| Durham | ... | ... | "Use of English" special experimental paper
(Midsummer 1962). |
| Oxford and Cambridge | | | Supplement No. 2 to 1962 Regulations on "Use
of English". |
| | | | 2 draft papers "Use of the English Language" and
"Use of English". |
| | | | "Use of English" paper (March 1962). |
| Oxford | ... | ... | Leaflet on Certificate of Proficiency in "Use of
English" and specimen paper. |
| | | | Examination paper for the Certificate of Pro-
ficiency in Use of English (March 1962). |
| Northern Universities'
Joint Matriculation
Board. | | | Extracts from report of committee appointed by
the Board to draft proposals for a test in English.
Circular on University Entrance (Matriculation)
Requirements (B.P.5). |
| | | | Specimen Paper for Test in English (B.P.6) |
| | | | University Entrance Test in English (UET/1). |
| Welsh Joint Education
Committee. | | | "Use of English" specimen paper. |

PART III

Report of the General Studies Sub-Committee

1. We were constituted a sub-committee by the Council's G.C.E. Syllabus Committee on 7th December, 1960, with the following terms of reference:—

“To consider existing regulations and syllabuses and proposals for new syllabuses in General Studies or General papers, to scrutinise question papers and sample scripts, to advise the Syllabus Committee on the above matters, and to communicate with the Examining Bodies through the Secretariat acting on behalf of the Syllabus Committee.”

2. We first met on Tuesday, 6th June, 1961, and we have since held five meetings, two of them jointly with the Council's English Language Examining Committee.

Existing General and General Studies papers

3. General papers are set by six of the nine G.C.E. examining bodies, namely, the Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate, the Durham Matriculation and School Examination Board, the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board, the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board, the Southern Universities' Joint Board and the Associated Examining Board.

4. Most of the General papers we have seen include a number of questions on different fields of study which require answers in the form of essays. The Southern Board's paper also includes a precis question and the Oxford and Cambridge Board's paper a test of comprehension and a question on passages of poetry. All except the Southern Board's papers are divided into sections and candidates are required to choose questions from a number of them.

5. A General Studies examination is set by the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board. This consists of the General paper referred to in paragraph 3 above, and a second paper which includes tests of comprehension, reasoning, verbal ability, simple mathematical ability, aesthetic discrimination and a question which tests understanding of prose in a language other than English. There is also an optional test in spoken English.

6. All the General papers, except that set by the Southern Universities' Joint Board, are approved as ordinary level subjects in the G.C.E. examination. The Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board's General Studies examination is approved as an advanced level subject.

7. All General and General Studies papers are intended to be taken by sixth form pupils, except for the General paper of the Associated Examining Board which is intended for candidates serving in the Royal Navy. The General papers of the Cambridge University Local Examinations Syndicate, the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board and the Southern Universities' Joint Board are primarily intended for state scholarship candidates. All these examining bodies have, however, said that they intend to continue to set General Papers when state scholarship competitions cease after 1962.

The content of General papers

8. We have considered the regulations and syllabuses for the existing General papers and we have scrutinised the question papers for the examinations in the summers of 1960 and 1961 together with a sample of scripts from the

1961 examination. We assessed these papers as tests of general education in the sixth form and our comments relate to their suitability for this purpose.

9. The papers set for the Royal Navy by the Associated Examining Board were designed for naval candidates and were not therefore comparable with the other papers. They appeared to us adequate for their purpose although we did not regard them as suitable for boys and girls in school.

10. The papers set for state scholarship candidates were designed to help in selecting a minority of the ablest pupils and they were not therefore intended primarily as a test of general education in the sixth form. Their content reflected their purpose; specifically, they concentrated upon questions which invited a display of high verbal ability, and did not ensure that knowledge was shown over a broad field, and they included subjects outside the experience of the average sixth former. They did not therefore appear to us to be suitable as tests of the general education of the majority of sixth formers although they might well be adapted for this purpose.

11. The Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board's papers appeared to us to be suitable for testing the general education reasonably to be expected in a good sixth form. We felt, however, that some of the questions required more time than was available if candidates were to make an effective choice of questions.

12. In general we found wide variations in the quality of the questions and in the standards of marking between papers. Such variations would have unfortunate and far-reaching consequences if these papers were adopted as part of a compulsory "General" requirement for university entrance.

The General Studies examination of the N.U.J.M.B.

13. One of the first questions we had to consider was the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board's General Studies examination which had been approved as an advanced level subject for an experimental period of five years from 1958. We agreed unanimously to recommend that this period should be extended and our advice was accepted by the Syllabus Committee and the Council.

14. From our scrutiny of question papers and scripts we are satisfied that the Board's General Studies examination provides a thorough and valuable test of general education in the sixth form and that it can take its place with other advanced level subjects.

Criteria for a test of general education

15. As a result of our consideration of existing examinations, we have reached several conclusions about the conditions which ought to be fulfilled by an examination which sets out to test general education.

16. First, we think it essential that any essay questions should be set on topics which may reasonably be expected to be studied in the sixth form or to be part of the extra-curricular interests of the intelligent sixth former. It is on this point that the difference between the aims of a test of general education and that of a scholarship paper are most apparent because scholarship papers often reach beyond the field of normal sixth form study.

17. Second, we should expect different sections of the paper to represent the humanities and fine arts, the sciences, and general topics of interest to all sixth

formers such as religious and moral issues and political and social questions. There should be a wide choice of question within each section.

18. Third, in order that general education may be broadly tested, we consider it important that candidates should be expected to answer questions taken from all the main fields of study. As we have said, all but one of the existing General papers are divided into sections from which the candidate must choose questions in a specified way. In many cases, however, there are loopholes. Often a question appears in the science section of a paper which does not require any real scientific knowledge.

19. We have considered whether a candidate should be required to pass or reach a minimum standard in each section of a General paper in order to pass the examination. We would, however, consider it sufficient for a candidate to be required to answer questions from each section and we would allow him to compensate for a poor answer in one section with a good answer in another. Otherwise we feel that there is a danger of placing an undue premium on diligent mediocrity.

20. Fourth, we believe that a test of general education should not be a mere test of general knowledge. Certainly, we should expect answers to be based upon sound knowledge, but we consider that at the sixth form stage candidates should also be expected to show that they can handle knowledge and evidence and formulate their own opinions about the facts at their disposal. We should not necessarily expect candidates to show more factual knowledge than is required in an ordinary level examination, but we should expect them to be able to make use of their knowledge in a more mature way.

21. Fifth, we should expect candidates to be required to express their facts and opinions in appropriate language. We believe that any good examination of general education is also an examination of English expression. This is not to say that we should wish to see marks given or deducted for English (unless the General paper is explicitly intended to test use of English for purpose of university admission—a point we return to later), but the efficiency with which the candidate conveys his ideas and the suitability of his language to his subject must be regarded as an essential part of his answer.

General papers and university entrance

22. So far we have been considering examinations of general education which schools may take or not according to whether or not they find it helpful to their use of minority time. In the report on University Entrance Requirements of a sub-committee of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, which was published in April, 1962, it was suggested, however, that, as part of a new "General" requirement for university matriculation there should be:—

"A General paper. This paper should be set on the assumption that at an earlier stage candidates will have passed at Ordinary level in either Mathematics or a science subject and also in two or three of the usual arts subjects (though these will no longer be a formal entrance requirement), or that they will have studied these subjects to an equivalent standard.

There is need for discussion of the appropriate sub-division and choice of questions in this important paper. It might include questions on general topics for all candidates, together with questions on Literature, History, Art and the like appropriate to the needs of those offering science subjects at Advanced level, and for those offering non-science subjects at Advanced level, questions calling for an elementary insight into science and some understanding of simple mathematical processes, of logical problems, and of modes of quantitative reasoning."

23. We appreciate that the report represents a serious effort to deal with the problems which have arisen from over-specialisation in the sixth form and to give more weight to minority studies in the competition for university entrance ; but we have some doubts about the solution proposed. In particular, we are not convinced that general education will be improved if it is directed towards success in a compulsory examination.

24. Nor can we fully accept the assumption made by the Vice-Chancellors' sub-committee that general studies at present occupy a "lowly and ineffective" place in the sixth form. In many schools excellent work is being done. Many and varied courses are being developed and many interesting experiments are being carried out.

25. General education is a field in which experiment and innovation will always be needed. We believe, however, that if general education is tied to a compulsory examination these developments may well be harmfully affected. If admission to a university is to depend on the results of such an examination, schools will no longer be able to risk experiment in minority time or to range as widely as they might wish in general education.

26. We realise that there is a wide range in the quality of the general education given in different schools. This often arises, however, from differences in staffing and environment and in the facilities available. One of the greatest advantages of freedom in minority studies is that schools are enabled to make the best use of the resources they have. Some of the best work in minority time is done by members of the staff who have their own particular interests, not necessarily connected with their specialist subjects, which they share with their pupils. It is particularly important for those schools which are less fortunate in respect of staffing to be able to use the resources they have to hand.

27. The compulsory requirement would be likely to have a cramping effect upon the examinations themselves. We have been impressed by the freshness of outlook of many of the question papers. But a paper which was part of a matriculation requirement could be experimental only within limits ; in fairness to the candidates it would have to be reasonably predictable. We should therefore expect that the papers themselves would become narrower and less valuable if they became compulsory.

28. For these reasons we should prefer general education not to become the subject of a compulsory examination. If, however, the universities believe that a test of general education in the sixth form is necessary for matriculation purposes, we think it essential to preserve for the schools as much freedom as possible.

29. We should hope that one uniform examination need not be imposed upon all schools. We should like to see several different types of test developed, provided that all were accepted by all universities. We think it would be an advantage if different papers were set which approached the problem in different ways; and we should like to see schools given the opportunity to submit their own syllabuses.

30. We understand that the Oxford and Cambridge Board are considering a scheme for internal examinations of general education which will be assessed by the Board. We consider this to be an interesting experiment, and we should like to see other such schemes, which may preserve the freedom of the schools to develop in the ways most suited to them.

31. A further point in the report of the Vice-Chancellors' sub-committee caused us some concern, namely, the proposal that there should be different tests within the "General" requirement for arts and science students. We feel that this can only emphasise the division between education in the humanities and the sciences, for we are convinced that there is much to be gained if arts and science students join together in minority time; each side is then enriched by the other's experience and the use of minority time becomes a unifying influence. We consider it a valuable exercise for both arts and science students to be required to answer questions on their own specialism in a General paper. The questions on a General paper require a different approach to both arts and science subjects from that required by the present specialist advanced level papers. Facts have to be considered in a wider context, and presented in a way intelligible to the non-specialist. We should therefore prefer that any new test followed existing practices which require all candidates to answer questions from all fields of study.

General papers and Use of English papers

32. We have also considered, with the Council's English Language Examining Committee, the relationship between any new General paper and the Use of English paper which is proposed as part of the "General" requirement.

33. The English Language Examining Committee were concerned that the separation through examination of English from general education might lead to the English paper's being deprived of all worth while content. We were equally concerned that it might encourage the conception that expression was unimportant in a General paper and that the General paper required only a recitation of facts. This we would regard as fatal to the value of the paper.

34. Our two committees agreed that a test of general education and a test of English could be combined through an examination which required continuous writing on a number of topics taken from different fields of study, and which might also include a test of comprehension (which might include summary) and, possibly, other types of test which would, however, need further thought. We agreed that such an examination might provide one method of satisfying the universities on both subjects with the least possible burden on the schools and the least chance of unprofitable preparation.

35. From the passage we quoted in paragraph 22, and from other parts of their report, it may be that the Vice-Chancellors' sub-committee expect a "General" paper to approximate to the Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board's General Studies examination rather than to existing General papers. The Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board's scheme for making the General Studies examination part of alternative arrangements for matriculation is, in our opinion, a sound one and we hope there will be other similar developments which allow candidates the option of matriculating otherwise than through the ordinary level examination. If, however, the proposal is to make an examination on the lines of the General Studies examination a compulsory requirement for all university entrants we must emphasise that we consider that examination to be fully equivalent to other advanced level subjects. To require a pass in such an examination as a "General" requirement with two advanced level specialist subjects as a "Course" requirement, might be reasonable; but we notice that the report envisages that for certain purposes the "Course" requirement would be three advanced level subjects. To require an examination of the standard of the General Studies examination with three specialist advanced subjects would be, in effect, to require four advanced level subjects. Unless advanced level syllabuses are reduced considerably more than appears likely at present we should consider this too heavy a burden for the majority of sixth formers.

36. Moreover, any attempt to make a General Studies paper a compulsory matriculation requirement in these circumstances would, in our view, inevitably result in a lowering of its standards. This we should be sorry to see.

Conclusions

37. Our conclusions may be summarised as follows:

(i) *Existing papers*

- (a) The General paper set by the Associated Examining Board for the Royal Navy is adequate for its purpose; it would not however be suitable to be taken by school pupils.
- (b) Those papers which are intended primarily for state scholarship candidates are unsuitable for testing general education in the sixth form.
- (c) There are wide differences in standards between the existing General papers which would become serious if they were made compulsory for university matriculation.

(ii) *Criteria for a test of general education*

- (a) Any paper testing general education should cover fields of study which may reasonably be expected to be within the experience of sixth formers.
- (b) There should be a wide choice of questions.
- (c) Candidates should be expected to answer questions from the different sections of the paper which should represent the main fields of study.

- (d) Candidates should be required to show that they can handle knowledge and evidence and formulate opinions about the facts at their disposal.
 - (e) In assessing a candidate's work in a General or General Studies examination regard should be paid to the appropriateness of the language he employs.
- (iii) *General papers and university entrance*
- (a) We should prefer that general education did not become the subject of a compulsory examination for the purposes of university matriculation.
 - (b) If such an examination is introduced, however, we consider it essential that the schools should retain as much freedom as possible.
 - (c) To this end, we would prefer to see several different types of test developed provided that all were accepted by all universities.
 - (d) In any new examination, arts and science students should take the same paper and both should be required to answer questions on both areas of study.
 - (e) A test of English and a test of general education might with advantage be combined.
 - (f) Unless "Course" requirements can be reduced to no more than two advanced level subjects, a "General" requirement of the standard of the present General Studies paper would be too heavy a burden on sixth formers.